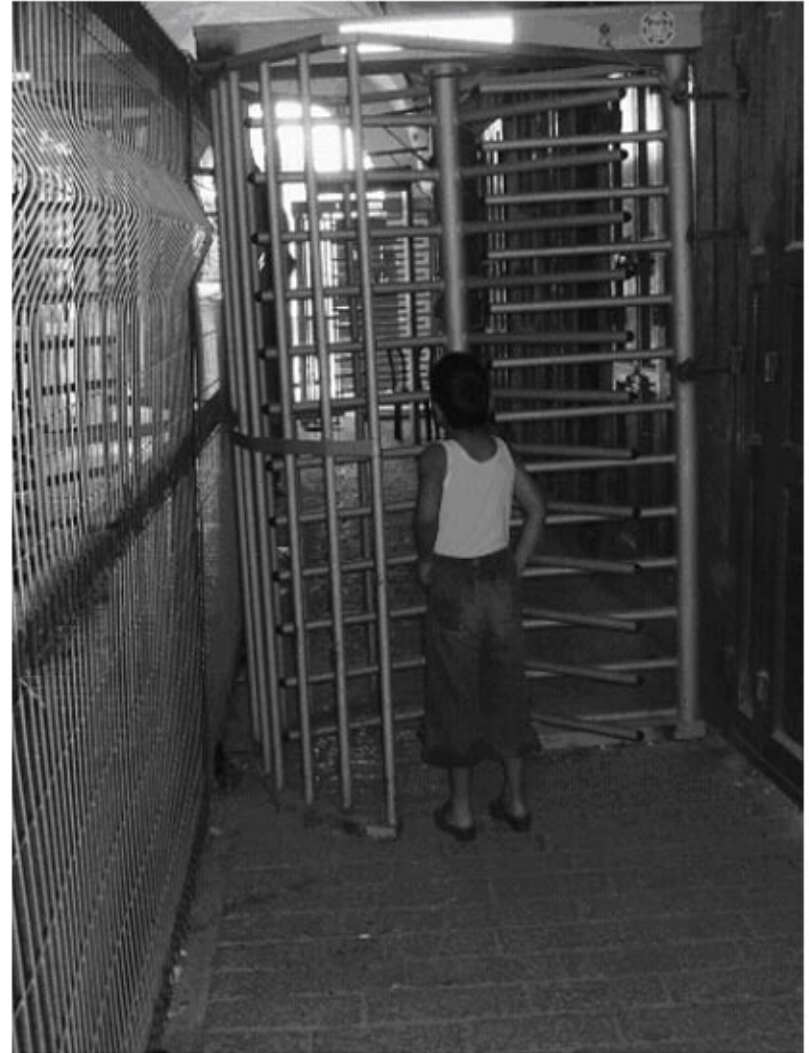
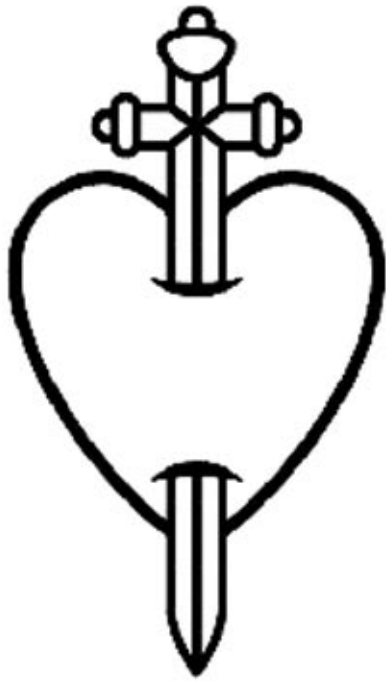


The christian Radical.

A journal of progressive Christian thought and opinion



Christian Anarchism, a Definition

By Ammon Hennacy

This essay is excerpted from *The Book of Ammon* (Fortkamp/Rose Hill, 1994) and is reproduced here without permission from the publisher.

Christian anarchism is based upon the answer of Jesus to the Pharisees, when He said that he without sin should be the first to cast the stone, and upon the Sermon on the Mount, which advises the return of good for evil and the turning of the other cheek. Therefore, when we take any part in government by voting for legislative, judicial, and executive officials, we make these men our arm by which we cast a stone and deny the Sermon on the Mount.

The dictionary definition of a Christian is one who follows Christ; kind, kindly, Christ-like. Anarchism is voluntary cooperation for good, with the right of secession. A Christian anarchist is therefore one who turns the other cheek, overturns the tables of the moneychangers, and does not need a cop to tell him how to behave. A Christian anarchist does not depend upon bullets or ballots to achieve his ideal; he achieves that ideal daily by the One-Man Revolution with which he faces a decadent, confused, and dying world. <

Editor's Note:

And it's with these words by Ammon Hennacy that I start what I pray will be a long running zine, and my attempt to bring a publication back to the Vancouver Catholic Worker community. When Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day started the Catholic Worker Movement back in the 1930's one of the main organs of the movement was, and still is, the Catholic Worker newspaper. It's still published out of New York, and in the decades since the great depression other CW communities were formed, and with them publications.

Samaritan House (the Vancouver Catholic Worker community) used to have a newsletter called "From the Well" which became defunct before I was ever introduced to the movement, much less Catholicism.

So, why else am I making this zine? Well it's my firm belief that the age of affordable print shops is long dead. Many CW papers trying to maintain their printing costs as well as their price (1 cent usually, or free) end up only being able to produce in limited numbers or infrequently. Zines on the other hand are affordable to make and to print and anyone can make copies to distribute if they so choose. It is also my hope that this little publication might expose some of my colleagues on the left to Christianity as something more than a stuffy, authoritarian religion, or a nut hatch full of people who think that Evolution is bad science and Assassination is good foreign policy.

It makes me sad to be confronted by so many people who would call themselves progressive yet would dismiss religion (and particularly Christianity) as something counter to goals of peace, social justice, or anything progressive or politically left wing. <

On Jesus at Columbine

By J. Barrett Lee

It was a day that most of us would never forget. Two years before the eleventh of September, was the twentieth of April, another day that would be remembered with tissues in hand. Two figures in black trench coats, carrying rifles, walked into the halls of a high school in Columbine, Colorado and started firing. Before the paranoia of terrorism had landed on American shores, before President Bush's crusade against the Axis of Evil, evil planted a flag in the flesh of fifteen teenagers on a spring afternoon. Rather than religious fanatics, anti-government militia groups, or Osama bin Laden, it was two white, upper middle class, teenage boys named Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold.

While the demonic nature of the slaughter was given much attention by the media, it was quickly overshadowed by the angelic overtones of the town's response. Fifteen crosses were erected on the hillside of the town, one for each of the dead students, including Eric and Dylan, who had committed suicide at the end of the shooting. While supporters and survivors gathered around each other in prayer, the stories of martyrs began to emerge.

Apparently, one of the killers had asked a Christian student, Cassie Bernall, if she believed in God. When she said yes, he pulled the trigger. This event came to receive more attention than the killings themselves. The evangelicals immediately took their turn in jumping over the publicity created by this new information. Pastors held up Cassie's example, asking other youth whether they would have

acknowledged God to the barrel of a gun. Michael W. Smith wrote a new song for Cassie. Christian publishers put commemorative books on the shelves. Cassie Bernall was the new patron saint of evangelical Christianity.

But there was still one question left on people's minds: What could drive Eric and Dylan to do this? The responses came pouring in. Everything was blamed. Video games, violent TV, heavy metal music, role-playing games, parents, guns, and parents with guns. Surely, there was something in the lifestyle of these boys that led them to murder their fellow students. The most interesting scapegoat in this case was the trench coat. These outcasts who dressed in black, listened to loud music, and wore long trench coats had been labeled as the "Trench Coat Mafia." These were the dangerous ones who were to be feared far and wide. Schools banned the wearing of trench coats and kept a close watch on anyone who seemed to fit into this subculture of misfits. They praised the tearful response of clean-cut evangelical kids who were being mercilessly victimized by the Trench Coat Mafia, not just in Columbine, but across America. Even those who hadn't pulled the trigger were surely capable of doing so at any moment. It quickly degenerated into an all-out witch-hunt. But there was one angle, which was never considered. Perhaps it wasn't video games, rock n' roll, Dungeons and Dragons, trench coats, or any other aspect of the lifestyle of these boys that led them to do this? After all, weren't there scores of other students just like them, but had never pulled a trigger on another human being? What caused it then?

Perhaps the answer lay in the kids themselves, not the killers, but the victims? Kids are cruel. Even good, clean-cut kids can be selfish brats at times. For six hours a day, five days a week, these normal, selfish, intelligent, hormonal teenagers are forced to sit and interact with each other at school. The social dynamics can be brutal. If one or more of them refuses to conform, i.e. to think, dress, talk, and act like the others, the others don't know how to react. The "abnormal" ones are pushed to the outskirts of the social sphere. There, they form counter-cultural groups, usually based on common interests. There are punks, nerds, goths, skateboarders, and in this case, the Trench Coat Mafia.

In their refusal to conform, these outcasts arouse the anxieties that exist in the minds of the others. Their strange demeanor and appearance highlight the awkwardness that all teenagers feel. This awkwardness is the greatest social "sin" to any teenager. All teenagers experience it, but some are better at hiding it than others. Those that can't hide it are made to bear the "sin" of the others.

Unfortunately, Christian kids are not immune from this kind of sub-cultural stereotyping. There is a social image, which is associated with the word "Christian." This image is developed, advertised, packaged, and sold by their parents and by Christian media. It is often indistinguishable from the happy, clean-cut image associated with the bulk of "popular" kids. Teens seem to conclude that good Christian teenagers look a lot like good American teenagers.

But what does this mean for those other kids on the outside? How can they be expected to come to grips with a faith that appears to require conformity to a subculture that has rejected them? These outcasts have counter-rejected

mainstream American culture. They conclude that if Christianity means conformity to that culture, then they don't want anything to do with it.

So, what really caused Eric and Dylan to go over the edge like that? I suggest that it was their fellow students. As the outcasts, Eric and Dylan had borne the sins of their classmates for too long. They took it upon themselves to heap judgment back upon the culture that had rejected them. That was their sin. I haven't forgotten that they were the killers. They chose to pull the trigger on thirteen of their peers. I don't offer this as an excuse, but as an explanation.

How could this have been prevented? I believe the Christians hold the answer to that. I thank God for the faith of Christians like Cassie Bernall, who acknowledge Jesus, even in the face of death. But here is my honest question: Where was that faith when Eric and Dylan were eating lunch by themselves?

Let's not take this lightly. Christians have no right to accept or reject people based on sub-cultural standards. Teens like Eric and Dylan are out there. Many of them are very intelligent and creative. If their gifts were allowed to flourish within the Church, we would see intellects and imaginations like Tolkien, Lewis, and Chesterton. But they are often rejected because those gifts can come in strange packages. Some have retreated into their own fantasy worlds through science fiction or science fact. But sometimes, it goes too far. They become detached from reality and the fantasy takes over.

Christians can intervene before that happens. The secret is in the grace that only comes through friendships. We've got to encounter them as people, not projects. Play

their games, be their friend, listen to them. In doing so, we offer them the grace to be who they are and rejoice in that. Of course, like any other friendship, it can be hard and difficult. Some of them may have no other friends. They may be clingy, even selfish. They will certainly be eccentric. Being around them, especially in public will feel awkward. But isn't that the business that Jesus is all about?

Two millennia ago, Jesus was drawn to the outcasts of society, and they to him. They were tax collectors, whores, and lepers, who were shunned by the Jewish community, which itself was looked down upon by the great Roman Empire. The King of kings came to dine with the rejects of rejects. Not only that, but he laid down his life for them, even reaching out to a dying criminal on the cross.

Today, Jesus isn't interested in cushioning the inflated egos of the "in-crowd," whether they're Pharisees or Full-backs, Centurions or Cheerleaders. He would never turn one of them away, but he asks that they acknowledge their sins, their helplessness, their social awkwardness, and any other criteria they use to exalt themselves over one another. The people of God are those who know they are sinners, nerds, punks, and freaks who have experienced the radical grace of God. That is the beauty of the Gospel! <

In Palestine

By Joy Ellison

While I was in Palestine I made a strange discovery: it is relatively easy to stand, unarmed, in front of angry soldiers. Really, it is. Let me explain.

Soon after I arrived in Palestine, I stopped at a checkpoint within the city of Hebron. There are seven checkpoints inside the small city of Hebron. These checkpoints sit in the street right besides Palestinian homes and Palestinians must pass through them everyday: Mothers on the way to the market, children on the way to school, families as they take their loved ones to the hospital, friends as they walk down the street to visit their neighbors.

I stopped at this checkpoint because two Palestinian young men were standing off to the side, leaning against a wall silently. Myself and members of Christian Peacemaker Teams asked the young men if they were being detained. They said "Yes, for two hours," and asked us to speak with the soldier manning the checkpoint.

I remember looking down and seeing the two ID cards lying on the cement of the checkpoint. For half a moment, I wondered, "Could I just snatch them and run?" Then I looked up at the soldier. "Why are you holding these boys?" We asked. It was my friend Shelly that set the soldier off. "You can't just hold these boys, unless they've done something," she said politely.

"I do not give a shit about international law!" Suddenly the soldier was screaming. "I do not give a shit

about human rights. I am the law. I will do whatever I want!"

I hope you'll forgive me when I say that I don't remember exactly what happened next. But I do remember the soldier screaming and telling us to leave the checkpoint. I was standing right in front of him. I watched as he raised his M16 and pointed it directly at me. I swear the rifle made some sort of clicking noise as he fingered the trigger. That moment I remember vividly. It was the first time that I had a gun pointed at me and I panicked. In an instant, four thoughts galloped through my mind. First, I thought, "I didn't think that intervening at a checkpoint was such a big deal!" Then I honestly, though irrationally, thought that I was about to die. I considered diving down to the ground, like you see on TV, or running out of the checkpoint, or crying, or doing anything to keep myself alive. But equally quickly, I stood up straighter. I looked directly at the gun. "I'm not moving," I thought, "Because I am proud of what I'm doing."

Shelly told the soldier not to point the gun at me, and he dropped it down to his side. For the next hour and a half, we stayed at the checkpoint as the soldier continued to yell and tried to intimidate us. Eventually, the boys were released. Shelly was arrested, but allowed to leave without charges. Our lives, the lives of the soldiers and the lives of the Palestinians continued.

I was shaken by this experience, but I recovered more quickly than I expected. Soon enough, guns, tear gas or sound bombs no longer fazed me. I thought nonviolence was becoming easier. I later realized that I was wrong.

I'm not saying that I am a brave person and I understand that my privileged status as an international and a white person allows me to travel through the West Bank without being a target. I am trying to say, however, that it is easy to become dulled to violence. And being dulled to violence isn't the same as practicing nonviolence.

Towards the end of my stay in Palestine, I had an experience that made me consider if I was really practicing nonviolence. I was standing in the front of a demonstration of Palestinians who are losing their land because it is in the path of the Wall – a 25ft high cement barrier that the Israeli government is constructing across Palestinians lands. "You must leave!" An Israeli soldier told me in a brisk, automatic voice. "No," I answered, probably sounding brash and annoyed. The soldier said, "This is a closed military zone. You must leave or I will arrest you in the name of the law." The soldier stepped back and tapped a plain wooden stick into his hand, like a cop. He didn't sound angry, strangely, just prepared, well trained. "In the name of God, I will stay right here!" I shot back at him.

An older Palestinian gentleman grabbed me then and pulled me back into the crowd. The soldier lost interest and I started to think about what I had said. Something felt wrong. It was good rhetoric, I suppose. I had wanted to communicate that my faith was part of the reason that I was demonstrating with my Palestinian friends. But what a face of Christianity I had shown: frustration, annoyance, and self-righteousness. Not much in the way of love. Much of the reason that I decided to go to Palestine was that I want to learn more about the meaning of nonviolence. I wanted God to teach me how to love other

people. But as God seems determined to surprise me at every moment of my life, naturally I've been learning more about nonviolence now that I'm out of the stress of the West Bank.

Now I'm back in the United States, I don't stand in front of soldiers. Instead, I speak in front of crowds who know very little about Palestine. Most of the people I talk with are open-minded and shocked by the stories that I tell. But there are others who already have firm opinions and sometimes I feel like they fire questions up at me like soldiers fire bullets. I find myself listening to a large number of questions that seem to reflect a great deal of racism and hatred of Muslim people. It's painful to speak about Palestine, and it's even more painful to try to love people who say such things. Lately, I've felt lost. What sort of nonviolent campaign would lead to public support for an end to the occupation?

As I've tried to imagine what sort of a campaign would be effective, I've thought a lot about the example of my Palestinian friend Fatima. Fatima founded an organization called Women for Life. Actually, Fatima originally chose the name "Women Against the Wall," and tried to organize women to take direct action against Israel's annexation Wall. Most women, however, just weren't willing to take that sort of action. So Fatima changed her focus. She didn't give up Palestinian liberation for women's liberation, but combined both. Now Women for Life works with women to meet their needs in a way that opposes the occupation. Fatima organizes income generation projects that help women to feed their families without getting a job in an Israeli-owned sewing factory. She also helps to run a

girls' group called "Flowers against the Occupation," that helps girls become strong people, well practiced in nonviolence. Fatima and the girls are currently organizing summer camps aimed at creating a children's movement to boycott Israeli goods. Her projects are among the more vibrant and productive I've seen in Palestine. They confront the occupation while meeting the real needs of Palestinian women. And there's some power in that.

I'm starting to wonder if there aren't some needs that I could meet in my anti-occupation activism. I've been thinking about why Americans support the occupation. Besides our government's unholy alliance with the military industrial complex, I think there are three primary assumptions that fuel public support for Israel's occupation:

- 1) We believe in the myth of "redemptive violence." In this case, we believe that it is possible for violence to end suicide bombings and bring security for Israel.
 - 2) We embrace a system of racism against Arab people. Many Americans fear and hate Islam.
 - 3) Many sincere and sensible Jewish people feel afraid because of the long history of Jewish persecution, overwhelming at the hands of Christian people.
- When I look at these beliefs, I see unmet needs at their roots. We need alternatives to violence. The relationships between white people and people from the Middle East need to be held. Jewish people really do need to feel safe in our communities and our world.

I tend to discount reconciliation work as overlooking the structural injustices of our world. But I'm starting to wonder

if we do reconciliation work with a real political consciousness. Moreover, if anti-occupation activism doesn't address these needs, and address them at a deep level, then how exactly are we going to convince people to

oppose the occupation? I'm pretty sure more marches won't make a difference. Movements with power are the one people want to join because the movement meets a need. That's direct action.

I'm learning that nonviolence is more than standing in front of soldiers. It's more than being nice when other people are mean. It's a love that meets the real needs of real people, healing the broken relationships that cement structural injustices. It creates political change through human transformation. And at all levels, it's disarming.

My friend Fatima gave me a rose when I left Palestine. "This is a piece of my land," she said. I could see in her eyes how much she wanted to give me a part of the land that meant so much to her, the land that all Palestinians are losing. You know, there's some power in that kind of generosity, that human connection. Think we could harness that power for political change? <



On Feeding the Hungry

By Chris Rooney

"This is getting ridiculous." This phrase has been running through my head almost all year. It's not gone away. We are given the luxury of living in a country that is not torn by violence and war, yet we play ignorant that these things still exist. Perhaps I just need to stop reading the news, perhaps I should just disconnect my internet and go live in the sticks on Vancouver Island with my typewriter and my guitar... believe me the thought is tempting, and that's always there too. But the easy way is not always the best way, and in this case the easy way makes me as complicit in the sorts of state approved and media condoned terrorism going on in the middle east and the criminalisation of the poor and homeless that happens every day in this city. And that's what I'm going to write about here, the people starving and being ignored.

I am disturbed daily by both of these things. Have you ever stopped and talked to one of the many panhandlers on the street downtown? I walk around down there almost every day and it's easy to pretend they don't exist, I think perhaps after doing it long enough they sort of disappear on their own. I get into conversations about it with friends sometimes, they usually give me some line about how they won't give money to someone on the street because that person will spend it on crack, or that person has been using the same line to get change since 1997, etc. And I am starting to wonder... if this person has been on the street since 1997 then why hasn't someone done anything to help?

Honestly I am just as hesitant about giving money to panhandlers but what I've started doing, not often enough though, is giving them food. And I still wonder, why don't more people do this? I mean just your average ordinary people? If even half of everyone in this city were to make a regular habit of feeding hungry people when they saw them I think we'd all be much better off for it. There is a lot being written about war these days. Soon enough the US will probably be expanding it's troops into Iran and a hundred thousand other atrocities will be committed globally and continue to go under reported or ignored. I doubt very much that any one person can do much to change this, and I doubt just as much that with the level of disorganization and the lack of solidarity that our current anti-war movement displays we will be making much headway together either.

Class war, it's a term much used but I don't know if most people really understand it to be anything other than a phrase written on banners at protests. Class war as I've observed it in this city is not something that is always as deliberate as say, dropping a shit load of bombs on a mosque or shooting a gun at someone in camo. Class war is the sort of war that gets waged through inaction. Class war is something everyone is engaged in whether we like it or not. It's when I avoid eye contact with the street kid because I need my change for laundry. It's the uncomfortable silence with which most of us greet legislation like "the safe streets act" or the "training wage". Class war is when we go to college to get degrees in order to compete for jobs which will

The Upper Mid West Catholic Worker Circuit and Growing Home

By Alex Iwasa, Socialist Labor Party

give us each the highest salaries and most stability later in life, and it's class war which makes a lot of us fear poverty because of increasing fees and student debt.

And old friend of mine who became active in the APC a few years ago used to like to say "No War Except Class War". In response to that I say bullshit. I don't want any war at all.

I may not be able to do much to stop the wars going on around me but I can refuse to co-operate with the war in this city. I can refuse to co-operate by becoming part of the solution. I can refuse to co-operate by writing this all down and hoping that you read it and that it gives you some inspiration. My sandwich is my wrench and I intend to jam it firmly into the gears of my own complicity. You don't have to be a member of a religion or a group like Food Not Bombs to make the world around you a better place or to give you an excuse to ease the suffering of those around you all you need to do is pack an extra lunch. <

In April through July I did a good chunk of the Upper Mid West Catholic Worker (CW) Circuit. I made phone calls, sent letters and e-mails to the various CW Communities, then headed out.

I volunteered at the St. Francis CW House in Uptown, Chicago, at the Growing Home project at the Su Casa CW in Back of the Yards, Chicago; I also volunteered at the Des Moines CW Community and the Strangers and Guests CW Farm in Iowa, and the CW Community in Winona, Minnesota.

St. Francis Catholic Worker House offers hospitality to those in need. There are resident Workers who run the house, volunteers who help them, and guests who stay there for various lengths of time.



The Su Casa CW offers hospitality to Latin American women and children. It was also part of the Sanctuary Movement of political refugees from Central America in the 1980s.

The Des Moines CW Community is made up of four houses, and serves two meals a day, five days a week to those in need. They also allow people to take showers, and have a number of items like clothes and soap available when it's donated to them. The community is also very serious about resistance, with many members participating in two local peace vigils a week, and various peace and justice events as they occur.

The Strangers and Guests CW Farm is in Malloy, a very small city in the southwestern corner of Iowa. There are animals and crops of course, but resistance is also a very important focus in the community. One of the Community members works for Catholic Peace Ministries, and frequents Peace Vigils in Des Moines, and travels all over the region to give speeches, participate in demonstrations, and network. He has even been to Iraq and Palestine, to work for peace.

A cottage industry of weaving being run by the community helps bring together the works for justice, of hospitality, getting back to the land and cottage industries that define the CW Movement.

The Winona CW Community is two houses, one offering hospitality to single women and families, and the other offering hospitality to men. There are meals served five days a week, and guests are able to take showers and wash their clothes.

The Community also has relationships with a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm, a vineyard, and a ranch in the area. The CSA farm donates food to the Community, who in turn bring it, along with other useful things such as toilet paper to low income housing in the city, where people can help themselves to what they need. In turn, some members of the Community work at the farm one day a week.

In the spirit of Catholic Worker cottage industries, the Winona Catholic Workers are learning to raise grapes in a local vineyard, to eventually start a business brewing wine for Communion. There is also a ranch in the area where they drop off excess compost that they don't use for their own gardens.

Right now I'm working on an organic farm that is the rural site for Growing Home, a job skills and readiness program for ex-homeless and low-income people. The trainees come out from Chicago twice a week, and the farm staff works out here about five and a half days a week.

The urban site is at the Su Casa CW House in Chicago, where the trainees work another two days a week. They also work in turn at the farmers' markets with other staff members in the Lincoln Park and Hyde Park neighborhoods in Chicago. The rest of our produce is sold on site, or through a 40-share CSA program.

There is a directory of CW Communities on line at <http://www.catholicworker.org>. You can also find out more about the Growing Home project on line at <http://www.growinghomeinc.org> <

The Catholic Worker Movement - fundamentally anti-war

The Catholic Worker believes in creating
a new society within the shell of the old
with the philosophy of the new,
which is not a new philosophy
But a very old philosophy,
a philosophy so old that it looks like new.
– Peter Maurin, cofounder of the Catholic Worker

The Catholic Worker movement has been against war and violence since it's founding in New York in 1933. Many but not all who call themselves Catholic Workers are pacifists. Many have been jailed for participating in civil disobedience based on principles of active nonviolence. Catholic Workers as communities or as individuals act in a variety of ways to oppose war and violence. They refuse to pay taxes for war by working at an income level that doesn't require taxation and most communities do not register as non-profits or charities. They do not give their donors tax receipts. They are motivated to protest in public as witnesses to their beliefs. The Catholic Worker movement opposes war and the capitalist system that promotes many forms of violence including imperialism that leads to the state sponsored violence we call war.

Two key elements of the movement sustain this position. One is that of practicing personalism in every aspect of our lives. Personalism is a philosophy which regards the freedom and dignity of each person as the basis, focus and goal of all metaphysics and morals. In following such wisdom, we move away from a self-centered individualism toward the good of the other. This is to be done by taking personal responsibility for changing conditions, rather than looking to the state or other institutions to provide impersonal "charity." (From the Aims and Means of the Catholic Worker) This makes our movement grassroots in the most fundamental sense.

The other element is that of religious faith. The movement primarily attracts people who profess the Catholic faith and other Christians who see their religious beliefs reflected in the context of the whole world and all of humanity. This faith is rooted in the Law of Love. The law of love is found in the Sermon on the Mount (also known as the Beatitudes) recorded in Matthew chapter 5 and the corporal works of mercy found in Matthew chapter 25. This faith, passed on to us from the words of Jesus tells us to focus on two primary actions and attitudes – love God and love our neighbor. And we do that by providing for the immediate needs of those around us (food, clothing, shelter, healing, and companionship) and loving our enemies and praying for our persecutors.

It is the philosophy of personalism that draws and holds together diverse Christians and people of other faiths and philosophies to the Catholic Worker. Personalism is the opposite of being solely interested in your own personal situation. It is about becoming connected, involved and co responsible for the lives of all those around us. It is the practice of the philosophy of personalism and the law of love that compels the Catholic Worker to take action on issues such as war and poverty.

In the Aims & Means of the Catholic Worker Movement, there is a section on Nonviolence that tells us that:

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." (Matt. 5:9) Only through nonviolent action can a personalist revolution come about, one in which one evil will not be replaced simply by another. Thus, we oppose the deliberate taking of human life for any reason, and see every oppression as blasphemy. Jesus taught us to take suffering upon ourselves rather than inflict it upon others, and He calls us to fight against violence with the spiritual weapons of prayer, fasting and noncooperation with evil. Refusal to pay taxes for war, to register for conscription, to comply with any unjust legislation; participation in nonviolent strikes and boycotts, protests or vigils; withdrawal of support for dominant systems, corporate funding or usurious practices are all excellent means to establish peace.

The Catholic Worker movement will always be actively seeking a changed society where violence in the form of war, oppression, exclusion, hunger and loneliness can no longer happen. It seeks a new society, built in the shell of the old society, where you are the keeper of your brother and your sister. <

Sarah Bjorknas – cofounder of the Vancouver Catholic Worker

The Aims and Means of the Catholic Worker

The aim of the Catholic Worker movement is to live in accordance with the justice and charity of Jesus Christ. Our sources are the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures as handed down in the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, with our inspiration coming from the lives of the saints, "men and women outstanding in holiness, living witnesses to Your unchanging love." (Eucharistic Prayer)

This aim requires us to begin living in a different way. We recall the words of our founders, Dorothy Day who said, "God meant things to be much easier than we have made them," and Peter Maurin who wanted to build a society "where it is easier for people to be good."

* * *

When we examine our society, which is generally called capitalist (because of its methods of producing and controlling wealth) and is bourgeois (because of prevailing concern for acquisition and material interests, and its emphasis on respectability and mediocrity), we find it far from God's justice.

--In economics, private and state capitalism bring about an unjust distribution of wealth, for the profit motive guides decisions. Those in power live off the sweat of others' brows, while those without power are robbed of a just return for their work. Usury (the charging of interest above

administrative costs) is a major contributor to the wrongdoing intrinsic to this system. We note especially, how the world debt crisis leads poor countries into greater deprivation and a dependency from which there is no foreseeable escape. Here at home, the number of hungry and homeless and unemployed people rises in the midst of increasing affluence.

--In labor, human need is no longer the reason for human work. Instead, the unbridled expansion of technology, necessary to capitalism and viewed as "progress," holds sway. Jobs are concentrated in productivity and administration for a "high-tech," war-related, consumer society of disposable goods, so that laborers are trapped in work that does not contribute to human welfare. Furthermore, as jobs become more specialized, many people are excluded from meaningful work or are alienated from the products of their labor. Even in farming, agribusiness has replaced agriculture, and, in all areas, moral restraints are run over roughshod, and a disregard for the laws of nature now threatens the very planet.

--In politics, the state functions to control and regulate life. Its power has burgeoned hand in hand with growth in technology, so that military, scientific and corporate interests get the highest priority when concrete political policies are formulated. Because of the sheer size of institutions, we tend towards government by bureaucracy--that is, government by nobody. Bureaucracy, in all areas of life, is not only impersonal, but also makes accountability and, therefore, an effective political forum for redressing grievances, next to impossible.

--In morals, relations between people are corrupted by distorted images of the human person. Class, race and sex often determine personal worth and position within society, leading to structures that foster oppression. Capitalism further divides society by pitting owners against workers in perpetual conflict over wealth and its control. Those who do not "produce" are abandoned, and left, at best, to be "processed" through institutions. Spiritual destitution is rampant, manifested in isolation, madness, promiscuity and violence.

--The arms race stands as a clear sign of the direction and spirit of our age. It has extended the domain of destruction and the fear of annihilation, and denies the basic right to life. There is a direct connection between the arms race and destitution. "The arms race is an utterly treacherous trap, and one which injures the poor to an intolerable degree." (Vatican II)

* * *

In contrast to what we see around us, as well as within ourselves, stands St. Thomas Aquinas' doctrine of the Common Good, a vision of a society where the good of each member is bound to the good of the whole in the service of God.

To this end, we advocate:

--Personalism, a philosophy which regards the freedom and dignity of each person as the basis, focus and goal of all metaphysics and morals. In following such wisdom, we move away from a self-centered individualism toward the good of the other. This is to be done by taking personal responsibility for changing conditions, rather than looking to the state or other institutions to provide impersonal "charity." We pray for a Church renewed by this philosophy and for a time when all those who feel excluded from participation are welcomed with love, drawn by the gentle personalism Peter Maurin taught.

--A decentralized society, in contrast to the present bigness of government, industry, education, health care and agriculture. We encourage efforts such as family farms, rural and urban land trusts, worker ownership and management of small factories, homesteading projects, food, housing and other cooperatives--any effort in which money can once more become merely a medium of exchange, and human beings are no longer commodities.

--A "green revolution," so that it is possible to rediscover the proper meaning of our labor and/or true bonds with the land; a distributist communitarianism, self-sufficient through farming, crafting and appropriate technology; a radically new society where people will rely on the fruits of their own toil and labor; associations of mutuality, and a sense of fairness to resolve conflicts.

* * *

We believe this needed personal and social transformation should be pursued by the means Jesus revealed in His sacrificial love. With Christ as our Exemplar, by prayer and communion with His Body and Blood, we strive for practices of

--Nonviolence. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." (Matt. 5:9) Only through non-violent action can a personalist revolution come about, one in which one evil will not be replaced simply by another. Thus, we oppose the deliberate taking of human life for any reason,

and see every oppression as blasphemy. Jesus taught us to take suffering upon ourselves rather than inflict it upon others, and He calls us to fight against violence with the spiritual weapons of prayer, fasting and non-cooperation with evil. Refusal to pay taxes for war, to register for conscription, to comply with any unjust legislation; participation in nonviolent strikes and boycotts, protests or vigils; withdrawal of support for dominant systems, corporate funding or usurious practices are all excellent means to establish peace.

--The works of mercy (as found in Matt. 25:31-46) are at the heart of the Gospel and they are clear mandates for our response to "the least of our brothers and sisters." Houses of hospitality are centers for learning to do the acts of love, so that the poor can receive what is, in justice, theirs, the

table. Anything beyond what we immediately need belongs to those who go without.

--Manual labor, in a society that rejects it as undignified and inferior. "Besides inducing cooperation, besides overcoming barriers and establishing the spirit of sister and brotherhood (besides just getting things done), manual labor enables us to use our bodies as well as our hands, our minds." (Dorothy Day) The Benedictine motto *Ora et Labora* reminds us that the work of human hands is a gift for the edification of the world and the glory of God.

--Voluntary poverty. "The mystery of poverty is that by sharing in it, making ourselves poor in giving to others, we increase our knowledge and belief in love." (Dorothy Day) By embracing voluntary poverty, that is, by casting our lot freely with those whose impoverishment is not a choice, we would ask for the grace to abandon ourselves to the love of God. It would put us on the path to incarnate the Church's "preferential option for the poor."

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We must be prepared to accept seeming failure with these aims, for sacrifice and suffering are part of the Christian life. Success, as the world determines it, is not the final criterion for judgments. The most important thing is the love of Jesus Christ and how to live His truth. <

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"The Aims and Means of the Catholic Worker" and "Christian Anarchism, A Definition" were both lifted from www.catholicworker.com and appear here without permission from anybody.

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"Boy in Turn-stile in Hebron" and "Moncad Head On" courtesy of Joy Ellison.

"The Light" and "Books" were both found in a high school darkroom in June 1999 by Chris Rooney.

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